

A Newbie's Guide to Discworld Conventions

By Justin Baldock, Maddie Tranter and Danny Sag

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Introduction.

As someone like you who is new to Discworld conventions, we want to make sure that you feel welcome, and you can avoid being confused and overwhelmed. Travelling by yourself to a convention, not knowing anyone else, and not knowing what to expect is scary. But it is worth it. To help, we have created this guide.



Justin: My first Discworld convention was Nullus Anxietas III in 2011. I now realize I had it easy. I went with my wife and son. We had no idea what to expect. Oh, I had been to other conventions, but a Discworld convention is like nothing else.



Maddie: Nullus Anxietas V was my first Discworld convention. I was also attending on my own. I had previously attended conventions such as Supanova and Lords of Time, but Discworld conventions run very differently and have a very different atmosphere.



Danny: Contrary to Justin and Maddie, my first ever *convention* was the first Nullus Anxietas in 2007. Before this, pop culture expos were virtually unheard of in Adelaide, and conventions like AVCon were still new. Thus, the environment of a Discworld convention is familiar to me, and it was the major pop culture expos like Supanova, Armageddon (now AMC Expo) and OzComicCon that seemed different when I started attending those.

What is a Discworld convention?

At the simplest level a Discworld convention is a gathering of people who enjoy any or all the writings of Terry Pratchett and everything in the Discworld universe.

Each convention might have a theme. Nullus Anxietas V was "Moving Pictures", Nullus Anxietas IV was "Soul Music" and Nullus Anxietas VI is "The Discworld Grand Tour". The opening and closing ceremony and Gala Dinner will tie in with the main theme and some of the events over the course of the weekend will as well, but mostly it's not that important. You certainly don't have to match your costume to the theme, for example, if you don't want to.

Over the weekend of the convention are a range of events and activities, and attending or participating in these is up to you - generally there's more than one thing on at a time, so a) you will hopefully find something you want to see or do, and b) you will often have to miss out on something in order to go to something else.

Before the convention

So you've taken the plunge and bought your ticket. Well done! That's a good first step. Other things you may want to consider doing before the convention are:

- Book accommodation at the hotel, or nearby.
Staying at the venue is recommended, just because it means no late nights driving/taxi-ing/bussing home, and you can drink as much as you want to. We will be working with the hotel to try and get convention attendees the best room rates possible.
- Work out how you're getting to the convention. Book flights, work out the best bus to catch or how much a taxi will cost, or think about driving! We will have some further information on the website closer to the convention date.
- Talk with other attendees or the committee about any queries you might have. We will have a [Facebook group](#) set up for everyone to use to chat, or you can submit queries direct to the committee via [the website](#).
- Subscribe to the mailing list (via the website) to get news updates via email - these will be about once a month, with perhaps a little more frequency closer to the convention.
- Follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) for shorter, more intermediate updates.
- Buy tickets to the Gala Dinner and post convention Tours, if you want. More info on those activities below!
- Buy convention merchandise (t-shirts etc). Mostly these will be pre-orders that you can pick up at the convention.
- Plan your costume and start making it! Of course, costumes are entirely voluntary, but if you want to dress up, we encourage you to do so!
- Volunteer to help out in some capacity! There are many jobs to do before the convention, as well as several during the weekend itself. See more below about volunteering.

On the Thursday night before the official start of the convention, many attendees will show up - especially those travelling from far away - just because it's a chance to relax, get settled, and maybe catch up with friends from previous conventions or people you've met online. Nothing formal is organised, but you may find plenty of people in the hotel who are there for the weekend. Feel free to say hi and introduce yourself!

The Friday morning the committee and volunteers are busy doing all the final setup. The convention proper officially opens around Friday lunch time, although the bulk of the people will arrive the Friday afternoon or early evening in time for the quiz and the opening ceremony.

What to do when you arrive at the convention

Check in to the hotel or other accommodation you've arranged. At the hotel, from mid-morning Friday, there should be clear signs pointing you to the convention **registration area**. Tell the people there who you are and you will get your convention bag. This will include several vital items.

- *Convention badge.*
This is your identity at the convention. Without it you will not be allowed in to programme items. Wear it at all times.
- *Programme Book*
This souvenir book contains information about the guests of honour, the committee, all the activities planned, plus other interesting articles. Normally it will be done in a theme matching the convention. Tradition is that very few people read this until after they get home. **This is a bad tradition** and you should break this by sitting down and reading it from cover to cover 5 minutes after you receive it.
- *Final Timetable of Events and Activities*¹
This might be the most useful item in the pack for you. It will be the most up to date schedule of the events planned. It will normally include a map of the venue so you know where to go.
- *Klatch tickets*
Klatches are small, intimate group chats with the guests of honour. Normally only 12 to 15 people in the group. A few sessions with each guest will be on the timetable, and you have the chance to attend them by random draw. You submit your ticket to Ops and names are drawn 2 hours before the scheduled time. So if you've ever wanted to chat with the people who knew Terry closely, this is the best way to do it (or you can approach the guests later and buy them a drink too, that also works).
- *Other bits and pieces*
There's usually a few small goodies in your convention bag in addition to the above. Be sure to look through them all as soon as you've registered!

Map

A map will be included so that you can find your way between the different rooms at the convention. We generally rename the hotel's rooms with Discworldly names, so the maps will have both names, which hopefully is not too confusing! The map is a very handy thing to have when you look at the programme so you can see where you need to go for that event that you really do not want to miss! There should also be maps and signs up on the walls helping you find your way around. If not, stop and ask a committee member or other convention attendee and they should be able to help you.

¹ The timetable is in endless flux, even during the convention itself, so 'final' may be a strong word. But it's as final as you'll get printed on a bit of paper ☺

What is there to do?

The Programme of Events and Activities

The scale of the programme will vary. The convention is normally open from around 11am on the Friday and will finish around 5pm on the Sunday. Generally there will be multiple events on at the same time. Major events will not have anything scheduled against them. It will be pretty full. Getting around the venue between different events is normally pretty easy.

Events will vary from serious discussions to the downright silly. There will be panel discussions for you to listen to or participate in, video presentations, Q&A sessions, beard making, chain maille and other crafting classes, board games, and we know there will be something on the programme even we've never heard of before.

Some programme items are a certainty - check out more below - and keep an eye on the website for descriptions of other activities. A full list will be in the programme booklet in your convention bag.

The Dealers' Room

Generally there is a dealers' room where you can buy books and other Discworld themed or related merchandise. It's not like the big pop culture expos where the dealers take up most of the space - we might have four or five at most.



The Bar

Justin: A favourite of mine, especially in the evening after a long day. This is a good place to chat with other Discworld fans, Share stories and pose for silly photos.

Maddie: I really enjoyed just listening to various conversations here, they ranged from favourite novels, to impressive trivia skills, to foolish politicians, to costuming plans. Be prepared to realise it is after midnight and you are still at the bar with the guests and attendees talking about anything and everything.

Volunteers

These conventions are run entirely by volunteers. While all the big jobs will have been allocated out long before you get there. Helpers or gophers are needed to help keep things smooth. Things like finding Guests of Honour before a panel, standing at the door to help direct other attendees, getting a coffee for a committee member, or any other odd jobs that need doing. The term "gopher" comes from the phrase "can you go for..."

Maddie: I decided the best way to get to know people and get involved was to be a helpful gopher. I came down from my room early and made myself available to the committee member in charge of volunteers. It was a great way to find out what was happening and put my name down for various events that seemed interesting to me.



Costumes

Discworld fans like to wear costumes - there's just so many characters to choose from! It is of course entirely up to you whether you choose to wear a costume or not, as well as how much effort you put into making one.

Some costumes are simple² (a torn shirt, some makeup and a protest sign: instant Reg Shoe), some are amazing demonstrations of skill (Death plus Death of Rats with glowing eyes and giant scythe). Some people have different costumes for each day. Some people wear costumes only to the Gala Dinner. Join in if you feel like it, or match the crowd in jeans and a t-shirt.

Maddie: I am a big fan of cosplay but was on a budget so managed to put together two costumes for less than \$50 (Op shops and cheap online costume shops can be useful!). Seeing the wide variety of other people also dressed up (Including Guests of Honour) was great, from the basic Discworld related tee shirt to a really tall and talented Death. A quick upgrade to one of my costumes from supplies in the craft room provided me with a silly talking point with others and is now a running joke. Basically have fun with whatever you are comfortable with and don't stress if you suddenly change your mind and want to join the fun, there are

supplies on hand to make your own fabulous beard or hat.

² Although don't go *too* simple with number of items of clothing- We know that barbarian heroes or Nac Mac Feegles don't wear much more than a loincloth or a kilt, but for the sake of the hotel staff and other guests, please wear a little bit more.

Guests

There will be some Guests of Honour invited to the convention - and it's possible you may have never heard of them. However, rest assured they are people who have worked closely with Terry Pratchett over the years, and they all have wonderful stories to tell. There will be information on the web site and in the programme book to let you know who these people are and what they have done and do for the Discworld community. For example, Rob Wilkins and Stephen Briggs came to Nullus Anxietas V, and we're hoping they'll join us for Nullus Anxietas VI as well!

Unlike at other pop culture conventions the guests will spend their time behaving just like other attendees going to or participating in programme items, wandering around, and lounging in the bar. Do not be afraid to talk to them, to introduce yourself, or offer to buy them a drink. There is no charge for signings or photographs, and although there might be times for a scheduled signing, most will be happy to sign stuff for you outside those times provided you ask nicely.

Maddie: The interaction with guests at the convention is very different to other conventions. They are approachable and just as happy to be here as you are. I was pleasantly surprised at how happy they were to chat and listen between events. Remember they are real people and love Discworld just as much as you do!



Programme Regulars

There are certain things that are traditional and... let's say, unique, about Discworld conventions.

Opening and Closing Ceremonies

The opening ceremony takes place on the Friday afternoon/evening and is a (hopefully) entertaining way for the committee to welcome everyone to the convention. Special welcome is given to the guests of honour (and Sir Terry's hat), and you'll be given a briefing about what to expect, safety issues and so on. The chant to remember is "Go To Ops".

The closing ceremony on the Sunday afternoon is the last event on the programme and is a chance for us to say thanks to all the hard working volunteers - from the gophers all the way up to the executive committee. Please come along to show your appreciation for all the work that's gone into making the convention happen.

Newbie's Guide to Discworld Conventions (Live!)

This is a quick run through at the start of the convention on a lot of the things covered in this guide. It will be much more comprehensive though and it is a good way to see just how to have as much fun as possible. I highly recommend it for people who are attending their first ever Discworld Convention. You'll also be able to get your questions answered by people who should know the answers right away!

Klatches - Guest of Honour chats

These are small personal sessions with the guests of honour. No more than 12-15 people in with the guest in a private room, and you can chat to them and ask questions. Submit your ticket for your desired Klatch session to Ops, and if you are lucky, your name will be drawn 2 hours before the start of the event. Ask at Ops for more information.

Charity Auction.

Generally Discworld conventions support a few different charities. Money raised by selling of various Discworld collectors' items goes to those charities. This is the event to go to if you want a signed book, a prop from one of the movies or something equally Discworldian. But be prepared to reach deep into your pockets for those special items... after all, it's for a good cause.

Some items may be sold as a silent auction (where you write down your bid on paper, rather than the auctioneer calling out for bids), and these items will generally be listed in Ops so you can bid on them well in advance of the actual auction event.



The Quiz

On the Friday/afternoon evening there is usually a quiz with Discworld and Roundworld based questions, which is a good chance for you to meet some new people (by finding a table and saying "can I join you?") and just have a bit of a relaxing time trying to rack your brains for that tiny tidbit of knowledge. Treat it like a quiz night, and bring along some food to share, and just have fun.

Maskerade and XXXX Factor

This is a chance for those of you who do choose to wear a costume to show off! The Maskerade is a costume parade where some judges will award prizes based on the quality of your costume. The XXXX Factor is a talent quest where you can perform a little skit or song (keep it short!) to see who can make the audience laugh/groan/cry the most.

To participate in either the Maskerade or the XXXX Factor, please try to sign up on the website beforehand, or in Ops by the Friday evening.



Gala Dinner

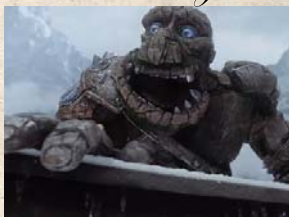
On the Saturday night of the convention, there will be a chance for you to put on your best frock or suit or Discworld costume and have a lovely evening of food and entertainment. This catered event does cost a little extra (tickets will be available on the website, and must be purchased in advance) but it is a wonderful evening.

If you can't afford to come to the Gala Dinner or you missed out on tickets, there will be alternate events running concurrently so you will still be able to participate with other convention attendees in something just as fun.

Folk Singing

Terry Pratchett was a fan of folk songs and Australia's own Martin Pearson brings some of the book songs to life. I'm sure at every convention the hotel staff think we are a bit strange as 100+ people sing the hedgehog song. (If you haven't heard it, you will)

Troll Bridge / Snowgum Films.



Troll Bridge is an epic fan movie based on a short story by Terry Pratchett and a group here is doing it in Australia. Every year for the past 10+ years we have had updates on how it is going. Hopefully it will be finished by 2017! If you've not seen it go to the main viewing and the behind the scenes documentary with a Q&A session with writer/producer/director Daniel Knight.

Board Games

Did you know there's 5 Discworld board games available? Want to learn how to play them or even some other great modern board and card games? Come along to the games room where we'll have a big selection for you to borrow and play, along with a few scheduled learn-to-play sessions for Ankh-Morpork, The Witches, Thud and Clacks.³

Werewolf

This fun party social deduction game is always a big hit at conventions. Don't worry if you've never played before, the rules are fairly simple and whoever's moderating the game will explain them to new players each time. In addition to scheduled Werewolf games, it's likely that unofficial games will take place - generally late at night, and possibly within someone's hotel room!

³ The fifth Discworld board game is Guards! Guards! but it is quite a long and complex game. If you want to play it, feel free, but it might take you away from other items on the programme.

Other bits and pieces of advice

Where did everyone go?

There might be times when it can seem like everyone just disappeared. If this happens you might be missing something that is really popular on the programme. Check it to find out or go to Ops.

Fans

As a group, we are like most other people. Some are talkative and outgoing, some are the life of the party and others might appear boring. Others prefer the quiet and a good book - which makes some parts of the convention a little scary. There are cliques⁴ and in-crowds⁵. If you try to strike up a conversation I can almost guarantee as a Pratchett fan you will be welcomed in to a group.

Ops

This is the hub of operations for the con. Come here for information on events, first aid, lost property, costume weapons checks and more. Have a question and don't want to disturb the frantic committee member you just saw? Go to Ops.

Food

The convention doesn't supply you with any food, except at the Gala Dinner. So remember to eat! The hotel will have a good buffet breakfast available, so you should maybe eat up big in the morning in case you forget to eat lunch.

There may or may not be space on the programme around meal times but it is so easy to get caught up in everything so that suddenly the next big event is starting and you didn't have lunch. Bring snacks with you if you think you will forget. There is a shopping centre directly opposite the hotel so you can always run over to grab something (or if you're smart, grab snacks before the convention starts on the Friday so you'll always have something on you).

The hotel also has several places where you can buy food, but they may not necessarily be quick or cheap.

The 5-2-1 Rule

This applies to all conventions, not just Discworld ones. It means that every day, you should ensure you get:

- At least 5 hours of sleep
- At least 2 full meals
- At least 1 shower

Some people follow 6-2-1 or other variants, and that's up to you as an individual, but although you might think it's fun to stay up all night or you're too busy that you forget meals, for your sake and for the sake of everyone around you, take care of yourself, get some sleep, eat some food, and wash away the sweat and grime of the day.

Meeting other fans

Maddie: By the end of my first Discworld convention, I had made a great many new friends and was wondering how on earth I would cope with the two year wait until the next one! Thankfully there are Discworld fan clubs in most major cities so the companionship has continued. If you want to meet some of the people who may be coming to the convention, find your local fan club via the website, get in touch, attend some events with them and then you'll already have fast friends when you get to the convention!

⁴ Most of the cliques will actually just be people who clicked at a previous convention and want to catch up.

⁵ The in-crowd is normally the exhausted organizing committee and depending on when you want to chat with them they might not be able to.

Glossary

Over the years, the Australian Discworld Conventions have developed a bit of its own lingo (some borrowed from the UK Discworld Convention) and so it can be a little confusing to a newcomer. Here's some of the common terms you might encounter.

Con: Short for convention.

Klatch: A small, intimate chat with the guests of honour. Entry is by random draw, but you will need to submit your ticket to Ops for the sessions you may want to go to. The word is a pun on the German/Yiddish "kaffeeklatsch" (a coffee and chat) and the Discworld continent of "Klatch"... hence, Klatchian Coffee. You can blame Terry for this pun, he came up with it.

Maskerade: Costume parade and contest.

Nullus Anxietas: The name chosen for the main Australian Discworld Conventions. Taken from "The Last Continent" where it's the motto of Bugarup University. It's (fake) Latin for "No Worries"

NAVI: Short hand for "Nullus Anxietas VI"

Ops: Operations. This is the central place where committee members get themselves organised, and where you should go to ask any questions, submit klatch and raffle forms, go for first aid assistance, drop off or look for lost property, bid on the silent auction, and much more. Basically, if there's anything you don't know, or a situation where you don't know what to do... Go To Ops.

The Watch: Security.

XXXX Factor: Talent quest. You can perform (or just watch others perform) short skits or songs to try and impress the judges.

What to do next

Congratulations on making it through the Newbie's guide!

There is obviously a lot to get your head around, but we are generally a friendly bunch and will do our best to make you feel welcome.

For now, please be sure to:

- Visit the website at <https://ausdwcon.org> on a regular basis, as information will be added as we edge closer to the convention.
- Subscribe to the mailing list (via the website) to get news updates via email - these will be about once a month, with perhaps a little more frequency closer to the convention.
- Follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) for shorter, more intermediate updates.
- Join the [Facebook group](#) to chat with other attendees.
- Find out more about your local [fan club](#) so you can meet other fans before heading to the convention.



Photographs in this guide are from Nullus Anxietas V, and were taken by Debra Robertson, Marah Weston, Heath McDonald, and Kate O'Neill. Troll Bridge image courtesy of Snowgum Films. Used with permission.